An Interview with Lt. Colonel E. D. Winstead

Oral History Project

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Atlantic Christian College  
(Now Barton College, Wilson, North Carolina)

“The past is dead only for those

Who lack the desire to bring it to life.”

Norman Cousins

*Footnote: The original title uses “Colonel E. D. Winstead.”*

*Footnote: This document has been retyped by son Ray Winstead in September - October 2018, and the page numbers are not the same as in the original document. Some mild editing of the original has also been done, e.g., corrections of some typos on the original document typed on a typewriter. There are a few cases where the typed original contains unexpected words and does not seem to be an accurate transcription, but those have been retained as in the original. Of course, there are also those cases where it is clear that this is an oral transcription and not intended as an edited, written document.*

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Introduction

This is a presentation of my oral history project - an interview with Colonel E. D. Winstead on his experience in World War II. The project fulfills my requirement for an Individual Historical Research class taken under Dr. Jerry Maclean in the fall of 1983. Dr. Maclean and I both felt that we could learn a little more about oral history by working on this project together. To our knowledge, this is the first oral history project done at Atlantic Christian. Hopefully it will not be the last. There are doubtless many people in the Wilson area who could provide excellent opportunities for oral history research.

The paper for this project is divided into four parts. The first is a brief description of the Philippine campaign to put the interview into historical perspective. The second is a brief biography of Colonel Winstead. The third is a transcript of my two interviews with him and the fourth is a conclusion.

I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know Col. Winstead and I learned a good deal from him about the nature of war and about one man’s reaction to a very difficult situation. We can only hope that this type of experience will not have to be repeated by too many others. Unfortunately war seems to be a part of the human condition. Doubtless there are many, even now, suffering through the same kind of experience as did Col. Winstead.

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The Philippine Campaign

The Japanese attacked the Philippine Islands ten hours after their attack on Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941. The two attacks were to have occurred simultaneously but bad weather tied up Japanese aerial forces on the island of Formosa. They attacked several air bases close to Manila including Clark Field, the largest air base in the Philippines at that time. In their first attack, they destroyed almost half of the 123 Allied aircraft while they were still on the ground. On December 10, the Cavite Navy Base was totally destroyed. The Japanese also landed forces on the northern shores of Luzon island capturing the airstrip at Aparri.

It took only a few weeks for the Japanese to take Manila which they attacked from the north and southeast. On December 26, General Douglas MacArthur declared Manila an open city. The Japanese then drove the remaining Allied troops on Luzon (28,000 Americans and 60,000 poorly-equipped Filipinos) into the Bataan Peninsula. The Navy’s Asiatic Fleet, some of the few ships the Americans still had left, retreated to East Indian waters. MacArthur was ordered to leave the Philippines and go to Melbourne, Australia. He left from Corregidor by PT boat vowing to return but things did not look good for the Allies during those dark days.

On April 3, 1942, the Japanese began a push to defeat the Allied troops on the Bataan Peninsula. Allied troops fought on, stubbornly tying the Japanese up for months, but the cost was high. Allied troops were down to one-third rations when Major General Edward King surrendered his troops on April 9, even though he had been forbidden to do so by Major General Johnathon Wainwright who had replaced MacArthur. It was the largest capitulation in American history. What followed would go down in history as the Bataan Death March. 70,000 Allied prisoners started the march to a POW camp 85 miles away — of the 70,000 who started only 54,000 made it to the camp. Thousands had died enroute of malaria, exhaustion, starvation, beatings and execution. The exact number who died may never be known.

In April, 1942, the Japanese began to shell the island fortress of Corregidor, the last remaining stronghold for the Americans in the Philippines. The shelling lasted for 28 days. On May 5, Japanese landed on the island. Two days later, Gen. Wainwright surrendered the 10,000 troops on Corregidor. At the same time, he ordered the surrender of all Allied troops in the Philippines. Many refused to

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surrender and went on to become guerilla fighters who harassed the Japanese during the period of the occupation. Those who had surrendered were held as prisoners of war in several POW camps. Roosevelt had decided that his first priority was to defeat Hitler in Europe, making the captured troops in the Philippines expendable.

It took almost two years for the Americans to return to the Philippines. Admiral Bill Halsey’s Third Fleet began to unlock the island on September 9, 1944. In the next two weeks, planes from the fleet’s aircraft carriers sank 69 Japanese ships and destroyed 893 planes in attacks ranging from southern Mindanao to Manila.

Admiral Halsey favored a strike in the center of the Philippines on the island of Leyte. He got the go-ahead for his plan and, despite several setbacks, he won a major naval battle at the Battle of Leyte Gulf. This battle effectively finished off the Japanese Navy. On October 20, the Allies landed on the island of Leyte. It took two months and 2,888 lives to take the island. From there the Allies went on to take the islands of Samar, Mindoro, and Mindanao.

On January 9, 1945, Allied forces went ashore on the island of Luzon against light resistance. On January 27, the First Calvary Division landed on Luzon and was ordered by MacArthur to “Go to Manila.”

MacArthur was especially concerned with liberating several thousand civilian internees who had been held at Santo Tomas University since the beginning of the war. The First Calvary drove 100 miles in 66 hours. At the same time, the 11th Airborne Division landed just north of Manila and fought to the outskirts of the city. Allied troops were able to rescue the internees at Santo Tomas and several thousand POWs from Bilibid Prison and other camps in and around Manila.

The Japanese did not give Manila up without a fight however; the city was defended by 16,000 battle-hardened Japanese Marines who fought for the city house-by-house. The city was bombarded by Allied artillery. It was virtually destroyed. Of the 700,000 citizens of Manila, 100,000 had died in the fighting. The fight for the Philippines ended officially on February 23, 1945, with the surrender of the remaining Japanese troops.

From the Philippines the Allies went on to take one island after another in the Pacific – the strategy of “island hopping.” It would be only a short time before the Japanese surrendered unconditionally, after the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

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A Brief Biography of Colonel Elton Winstead

Elton D. Winstead was born in Wilson on October 7, 1913. He grew up in a house at 1006 Gold Street. He attended Woodard Elementary and graduated from Coon High School in 1930. Upon his graduation from high school, he enrolled at Atlantic Christian College where he “majored in indecision for one year.” He left school and went to work for Southern Dairies where he made ice-cream and drove delivery trucks. For a short time he ran a concession stand in a tobacco warehouse downtown.

In January of 1934, Elton went to Fort Bragg to inquire about joining the army – a friend had gotten him interested in the idea. Getting into the army was pretty tough in those days because of the Depression but he was at the right place at the right time and typed his way into the army, replacing a clerk-typist who was leaving. This was on February 6, 1934. From Fort Bragg, Elton was transferred to Fort Scott, California where he was assigned as a clerk to the East Battery – 6th Coastal Artillery, the outfit responsible for protecting San Francisco harbor. His next stop was Fort Monroe, Virginia, near Newport News, where he attended a coast artillery school. The school lasted for ten months, ending in June, 1936.

Elton met his wife here in Wilson. Josephine Minshew from Black Creek – whom he married on September 2, 1938. She was a nurse at the time; he was a private 1st class. He was promoted to staff sergeant later that same month.

In May, 1939, Elton was transferred to Manila and then to Corregidor. In August of 1940, he was promoted to Second Lieutenant. He worked on the island fortress of Corregidor as an electrician in the communications section. Due to the increasing hostility between Japan and the United States, his wife was evacuated from Corregidor in May, 1941, just three months after the birth of his first son.

The Philippines were attacked in December, 1941. In May, 1942 Corregidor fell to the Japanese and Elton was taken prisoner. He was incarcerated as a prisoner of war until freed by the Allies in February, 1945.

He returned to the United States, in March of 1945, and was assigned again to Fort Monroe and then to Fort Scott as a teacher of engineering and gunnery. He was promoted to Captain in December, 1941, (as a POW) and then Major in February, 1945. A number of assignments followed, including stays at Fort Totten, New York for two years, Panama for two years, Fort McPherson, Georgia

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and Korea, in June of 1957, where he served as an advisor to an anti-aircraft brigade. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in December, 1950. He returned to Fort Bragg and retired from the service on December 31, 1957.

Elton returned to Atlantic Christian, as a student, at the age of 44; he was a science-education major and graduated with a BS in 1960. He did postgraduate work at Duke University, where he received his masters and his doctorate. He began teaching at ACC in 1962, as a math and education teacher, and served as the chairman of the Math Department from 1966 until his retirement from Atlantic Christian in May, 1977.

Elton has three sons and one daughter and currently resides at 710 Broad Street.

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Transcript

This is the first part of a tape with Colonel E. D. Winstead for my oral history project with Dr. Maclean.

Q. Col. Winstead, could you describe for us what conditions were like on the island fortress of Corregidor shortly before the Japanese invaded?

A. Shortly before – give me a time frame – you’re talking in terms of six months, three months –

Q. During the artillery bombardment that lasted 27 straight days, I guess it was.

A. You’re talking about sometime in ’42, just before the surrender in May of ’42.

Q. Right.

A. Well, at that time, Corregidor, or living in Corregidor at that time, was very similar, as I think it would be, living on a bull’s-eye, because we thought at the time, or I thought, we were surrounded on five sides, and I often wondered about that sixth side, if they weren’t coming up under us. But the bombardment from artillery at that time after the surrender of the American/Philippine forces on Bataan sometime after, if I remember correctly, May-April 9th, in ’42. Then the Japanese consolidated their position, moved into the lower part of Bataan, and that’s a very short distance across that part of the channel to Corregidor. So they could put any kind of weapon really, artillery weapon, on Bataan, and under — that was within artillery range. The Japanese 105’s, the 75 smaller caliber, and heavier artillery. Coupled with that, there was some aerial bombardments at the time. The shelling went on long enough, continuously enough, so that Corregidor became nearly defoliated.

Q. When General Wainwright did finally decide to surrender, the Japanese were already on the island to a certain extent. Did you feel because of that you had heard about the Bataan Death March that your lives were in danger? That you probably wouldn’t make it to a POW camp?

A. Well, I’m not really sure at that point, under the – at the time of surrender, those thoughts came about. There were no heroics involved; one does what he has to do. And the, I think Wainwright was under the, as it turned out, the

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mistaken idea that he was dealing with professional soldiers who recognized the, really the honor among professionals. But the difference in the Japanese culture and the Occidental culture is such that they don’t think as we do, the culture is different, it turned out from the U.S. standpoint, we were not in fact dealing with a, as we would describe the term, an honorable enemy. They mistreated Wainwright. They – the Japanese philosophy was such that no professional soldier would surrender under any circumstances. The idea of surrender was foreign to the Japanese at the time.

Q. So you weren’t honorable captives, in other words. You had disgraced yourselves in their eyes?

A. This is true. In fact, the use of the term “captives” is a very real one, because there is a distinct difference between prisoner of war and a captive. A captive does not have to be accounted for to anyone. A prisoner of war carries with it the connotation of an accounting, at least to some other body, either to one’s own headquarters or one’s government, or, under some circumstances, to the international body of the Red Cross.

Q. Can you describe for us basically what the battle for the island of Corregidor was like for you, and then describe what the situation was like right after the surrender when you were taken prisoner, how you were treated, where you were sent, and that sort of thing?

A. Well, the battle itself on Corregidor, like any other battle, has to do with two things – to do your job, whatever it may be, and to survive, and I was fortunate enough I did survive, and I think I did my job. But the surrender itself came about, I think on the morning of the 6th of May – about that time. There were not enough Japanese on the island really to take over at that point. They could have been kicked off of the island in that particular wave. The Japanese were surprised that they had taken the island on the first try. They had anticipated trying the second night, back down in one of the ravines, which would have also been as costly as the first try. But the eventual outcome would have been the same. Corregidor could be taken the same as any other fortification if you are willing to put enough time, effort, and throw enough people at it.

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Q. What happened right after the surrender? I remember something about you were put on a freighter and then on a train. Could you describe some of the details of the journey to the POW camp?

A. Well, after the surrender, things were somewhat in limbo. The Japs didn’t know quite what to do with us, and we didn’t know what they were going to do with us. But things remained somewhat as they were, or people remained in place until they were directed to move by the Japanese. They had moved troops defending the beaches, and removed them to an area down on the tail-end of the island into one building and on a cement ramp which had been an old seacoast hanger, and a ramp on the end of it, out toward the end of Corregidor. So we remained there for some, I think two or three weeks about, some period of time. And during that period of time, friends of mine approached me on making an attempt to escape. The plan was to get enough material together, build a raft, which is no problem because we could have used ammunition metal containers which is a pretty heavy gauge metal, and it’s sealed and that’s the type of metal tube which the artillery powder was stored in. It’s hermetically sealed. It’s airtight, gas tight. It would make a good buoy. So, the idea was to go across to the Cavite side. The moon was right; it was dark, and that was about 9, 10 – it was more than that –9-10 miles plus across to the Cavite side. I thought about it and vetoed the attempt, because there was nothing – the only escape route was south to Australia, and everything else in between was held by Japanese, and that was basically 2,000 miles of Japanese held territory.

Q. So you didn’t feel like your chances were going to be too good?

A. The chances, as I could evaluate at the time, were nil. I’m not really sure why they wanted me to go along. It could have been any number of reasons. Perhaps their belief in the ability to survive, some smattering of Filipino and Spanish. But the Filipino would be of very limited value, because once you get from out around a given area, then it becomes another dialect anyway. But, one couldn’t live on the land under those circumstances. One couldn’t live in the Philippines without depending on the Filipino, and the Filipinos at that time were not dependable. They would turn you in for a 50-peso reward. One group did just that. They went across, landed on the Cavite side, and instead of keeping moving, they were enjoying the particular freedom , and

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having breakfast with a Filipino family and they looked out and it was too late at that point. They were surrounded by Japanese troops.

Q. How did you get information like this on people who escaped and what happened to them?

A. I got the information on that particular group after they were taken back in, recaptured and carried back into –

Q. So they were right back up where they started?

A. Oh yes, yes. Trussed up like pigs on a bamboo pole. But I suppose primarily one reason I didn’t try it was because there was enough faith in the US government that at some time — whenever – that my dated death would be established in such a way to the advantage of my family. So the only way I could help my family here was to live as long as I could, hoping that they would draw pay for whatever time I was alive, and that’s as far as I could go. There was nothing else I could do for them at that particular time, and there were no heroics involved. It was a very cold-blooded, pragmatic type calculation.

Q. During all this time, did you feel for the most part that eventually you would be released, and that the Americans would come back, or did you honestly feel like you probably wouldn’t get through it, and that you were just trying to hang on for as long as you could?

A. Well, in the early stages, the idea was to live as long as I could. As time progressed, I’m not sure whether I became either adapted to the circumstances or came to believe that. Well, I suppose I believed that I would eventually get out. I wasn’t quite sure under what circumstances. There was no doubt in my mind that the Americans would retake the Philippines. The Japanese couldn’t understand that philosophy. They couldn’t understand that belief because the Japanese soldiers, when they were presented with this idea, said no way. They had taken the Philippines once, and they were theirs. It belonged to the – so MacArthur couldn’t come back. I mean they weren’t his anymore; they belonged to Japan. But the same people also believed that at that time they were bombing Chicago. But, I think that I was basically optimistic. As I said, there was no doubt in my mind that the Americans would return. I wasn’t quite sure how many people would be there and under

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what circumstances. Facetiously, and maybe not so facetiously, when the discussion would come up about how many would survive, my comment was that maybe a dozen would survive, but I just didn’t know who the other eleven would be. Perhaps this type of attitude actually aided in survival. I don’t know.

Q. So you think that it’s a possibility that that attitude on your part enabled you to carry yourself through with this ordeal, whereas you think some people just eventually did give up and that maybe led to a more rapid onset of disease or they just didn’t care about eating if they could eat at all, and that sort of thing? They more or less just gave up and died because of it?

A. Well, people did. I knew one American Captain who said he could not eat rice. And I said you have no choice. You either eat the rice or die because that’s all there is. And he said I know that but I can’t eat the rice. The more I chew it, the bigger and bigger it gets, and he just couldn’t swallow the rice. I said under those circumstances you’ll die. He said he knew that, and he did. He just couldn’t eat the rice and he died. Another – people react differently and it’s difficult to tell how a given individual will act and react under some circumstances. I had two people in my unit, one I thought would have to have someone to really hold his hand and look after him. Otherwise he would not survive. The other was what we called a really bamboo citizen. He had been in the islands for years and years. I thought he would adapt and he would survive and I thought he would, in turn, look after the first individual who was unable to look after himself under those circumstances. The situation was reversed. The one I thought would survive didn’t. The one I thought would need help actually helped the second individual and the first one did survive. He came back sometime shortly after I did.

Q. What was the trip to the POW camp like right after the surrender?

A. Well, after the surrender, sometime shortly thereafter, all the troops on Corregidor moved on to the seaplane hanger area and eventually, I think it was a matter of two or three weeks, Japanese freighters appeared in the harbor and we had no idea of where we were going except rumors were rampant as always under those circumstances. We were in fact taken out and loaded on to Japanese freighters. We still had no idea which way we were

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going — back to Japan or back to Manila. The ship did, in fact, turn toward Manila, so ok, we were going back to Manila. And they took us down to someplace outside of town, not at the dock area but down on the shore around Dewey Boulevard, and dumped us overboard in landing barges in waist-deep water. The landing barges could have gone much closer and dumped us ashore, so we could really have walked ashore without getting either wet or very wet, but this was another type of harassment. And then we walked some few miles to Bilibid Prison in Manila. Bilibid was a civil prison in the heart of Manila. They also had an extension of Bilibid Prison on Corregidor. These were civil prisoners, Filipinos, and the Americans guarded them and used the labor on Corregidor prior to the war. These were long-term prisoners. Some had as much as two or three hundred years to do, and if they would do something you would take ten years off this two or three hundred years, they were quite happy. I don’t know why, but —. I was also in a unit, a guard unit, which guarded the civil prisoners on Corregidor for awhile. It’s a little ironic that I wound up inside. As we arrived in Cabanatuan, we had blankets that we had taken with us from Corregidor. That’s all we had is what we had taken with us, and after two or three days, it was quite crowded and nothing doing. Nobody knew what was going on, if anything was going on, and then we heard a rumor – my executive officer and I heard a rumor that the 1500 people over next to us were moving out the next day. We didn’t know where, but we thought it would be better than this one. At least it would be a movement. So we picked up our blankets and moved over with the next group. Eventually, the next morning, we moved out. We boarded on small gauge train boxcars. Now, this is a very small boxcar, and they put 120 American POW’s in each boxcar. This is so crowded that if one fainted, he couldn’t fall down. We were taken to Cabanatuan #1, which is 100 plus miles out of, north of, Manila. We spent the night in a school yard and next morning we walked to Camp #3 which had been a training camp for the Philippine Army. Since we built the camp, we really couldn’t complain. It was a bamboo-type structure with thatch roofs – the usual structure in the Philippines, a double deck type of situation. The places where people stayed were about 8 x 10 and in some cases, there were five people sleeping in the 8 x 10 area. That doesn’t give you a great deal of room.

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Q. I can imagine. But for the most part, the march and the transportation to the camp itself wasn’t anything like the Death March that had gone on.

A. No, not really.

Q. There wasn’t as much brutality and that sort of thing?

A. No. There was some, but not that much. No, there was no comparison between the two.

Q. What was your general feeling about your Japanese captors at that time? Were most of them brutal or most of them decent human beings, or somewhere in the middle?

A. Difficult to talk in terms of most or an average. They were individuals. During the short time I was at Cabanatuan camp #3, four people attempted to escape. Not very smart. They didn’t go anyplace except walking down the road. I don’t know where they were going. But the Japanese picked them up very quickly, brought them back, and tied their hands behind them, their legs behind them, in a squatting position or folded position, and tied them to a 4 x 4 corner post at a shed type building. A building that had posts to support a roof and that’s all. They sat there in the sun all day and we thought that was their punishment. That was only the beginning. At the end of that, they untied them and took them out to four graves, shot them and buried them. So, I stayed at that camp for about a week, 10 days maybe, and went back to Manila on an intelligence G-2 operation questioning by the Japanese, and from there I went back to Corregidor.

Q. What was the general quality of life like while you were a POW in the POW camps?

A. Well, it wasn’t a quality of life, it was a lack of. However, as somewhere along the line I have said earlier, memory tends to dim the disagreeable, unless one works at remembering the unhappy part. The Japanese were individuals, some good, some bad, some indifferent, and some I would be just as happy to learn that they didn’t survive. “They would be miserable individuals under any culture as far as I am concerned. However, in fairness to the Japanese and our treatment as POWs, we must keep in mind the difference in culture and philosophy, and succinctly, I suppose my definition of the treatment would be lack of, rather than treatment. Now there were cases of brutality,

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particularly on the farm at Cabanatuan camp #1. But that had to do with particular Japanese guards, supervisors, again as individuals. And again, one has to keep in mind that there is no love lost between the Occidentals and Orientals over a long period of time.

Q. So there were a number of Filipino prisoners with you at the time?

A. No. All these were American prisoners. And the Filipinos, the Philippine armies, Philippine scouts, basically had been paroled, turned loose and sent back home, and of course, watched very carefully so they didn’t become subversive, etc. But the people in camp where I was in camp were Americans. A few who had been American civilians, and for one reason or the other had joined the military establishment, either as reserve officers or in some capacity, and if they were taken with the army, then they were treated as military personnel.

Q. Were you adequately fed while you were a prisoner of war?

A. I recommend rice as a reducing diet. A half pound of rice per day, and very little else. Somewhere along the line we were told either by medical personnel or by rumor that we were getting about 600 calories per day. I also think at the same time we heard it takes 1400 calories just to lie flat on your back and do nothing. So, I still recommend rice as a reducing diet.

Q. How much weight did you lose? Do you have any idea?

A. Oh yes, 60 pounds. I dropped from 155 to 95.

Q. Did you daydream about cheeseburgers and stuff like that?

A. Oh, this was a very real form of either punishment or whatever. Some people collected recipes, dreamed about food and talked about food. You could tell the difference in the level of the menu or the quality of the food or the diet. Because, if the food picked up sufficiently enough, then people, in addition to talking about food, began to talk about other things – girls, etc. But most of the time, it was daydreaming about food or survival. There were other studies possible, language. I used a little time in studying Spanish, among other things.

Q. I guess you had nothing but time?

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A. Well, this depends on what you were doing. No, we worked. While I was on Corregidor, I was, after the initial G-2 phase in Manila, which lasted about ten days to two weeks, the Japanese were questioning and trying to determine or to justify their belief that we, the Americans, had violated the armament treaty between Japan and the U. S., which limited the amount of armaments on Corregidor. And they knew exactly how much ammunition we had received. They told me how much had come in, on what ship, who unloaded it, on what date. When I unloaded on Corregidor, they knew exactly and they were correct. So, then they quickly added this to what our inventory already was, and came up with a figure which was beyond that which was authorized by treaty. Then I would have to counter, and it was easy to see which direction they were going; then I would have to destroy X number of powder charges to compensate, to keep it at a given level, which is basically true. I did just that. The powder charges would be tested, and if they get damp or old, have a leaking container, the powder charges become of limited value because they operate erratically. So you destroy them. And you destroy them by burning, which I did on the tail end of the island, as required. So I destroyed some good ammunition under the supervision of the Japanese later on, but that’s a different story.

Q. During the time you were a prisoner, what kind of clothing did you have? What was the shelter like? And, was there any recreation?

A. The clothing was the uniforms that I carried with me, or I had at the surrender. Well, at the surrender, I carried an extra uniform, a few miscellaneous things, a blanket that I could carry in one roll or musette bag really. As we went to Bilibid the first time, and then up to Cabanatuan and then back to Manila, and then back to Corregidor, knowing what was out there in the other camps for the roughly 18 months on the second tour, that particular tour, at Corregidor, when we went over again for a G-2 operation with the Japanese with the same line of questioning, which had been done in Manila by a different group. Even now I am convinced that the two groups never coordinated their findings. At that time, I wondered, and then later on, I thought that perhaps professional jealously between the two sets, one was ordinance, one was G-2, that the two never got together. But the same type of questioning came about. After the questioning ended at Corregidor, we stayed on as a salvage crew on Corregidor. Salvage operations for metal, primarily, to include

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operations on Corregidor and the other operations on the other islands within the harbor defense, to include the outposts of Fort Frank, Drum and Hughes. The time on Corregidor was spent in collecting additional uniforms. Now when a large army moves out and walks and leaves whatever supplies it had to support itself, it leaves quite a mess. It leaves somewhat like walking out of a home, or first having somebody ransack the home, and then walk off and leave it. That’s about the kind of mess we left on Corregidor. So there were uniforms and other miscellaneous pieces of equipment available all over the island. So, for quite some time, instead of doing any laundry, I just put on another new uniform and threw the old one away. Later on, of course, I collected enough to carry with me when I returned to the camp at Cabanatuan which I thought I would eventually go back to. The number of uniforms, I am not really sure how many I took because there is a limit as to how much you can carry anyway. But I did carry a blanket. I think, if I remember correctly, a mosquito bore *(RLW: net? I did hear him say net in this context previously.)* at that point which I did not carry the first trip, and did need. In addition, I took a thin mattress, more like a mat than a mattress, an inch, inch and a half, two inches thick mattress, cotton mattress, cut it in two, resewed the two ends so that I had two pads, not identifiable as a mattress. Then when I went back to Cabanatuan, I did have a little more comfortable bed, that I took with me. But the clothing that lasted me the duration was that which I carried with me and that which I picked up on Corregidor. I was never issued any piece of clothing by the Japanese or any other agency except one pair of shoes. And that eventually came through the Red Cross, I believe.

Q. What kind of contact, when you were a prisoner, did you have with the outside world, as far as the Red Cross or any kind of news about what was really going on? Or was there any?

A. Well, the news was a contraband radio which we did have, but which was shooting material. After the war started going well, after the Americans moved into New Guinea, then the radio was taboo. We couldn’t listen to a radio either Tokyo or KGEI. But there were radios available and we did get the news on them. So the news was available and reasonably accurate. There were newspapers, American language newspapers, that were printed in Manila. Sometimes they came into camp. The interest there was not in what was said, because it was strictly controlled and slanted newspaper stories.

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But it was interesting from the standpoint of geography. We could look at the geography and tell which way the Americans were coming. They were moving straight up the island chain from Australia. The news stories, of course, were that the Americans didn’t have sense enough to know when we were being defeated, or being kicked around. But we watched the geography. The Americans, in their blind stupor, kept going further and further north, and that’s what we were really interested in. There were people in camp who owned businesses downtown. They were some of the civilians who were with the Army at the time of the capture, so they were incarcerated with the military rather than with civilian internees. There was one individual who owned a string of race horses down there. He was interested when he got the newspaper to see how his ponies were doing. But there were others who would cash checks. Money came in over the fence in hundred thousand peso packages. There was a commissary, of course, where food was sold. If you had the money, you could buy some limited food, plus cigarettes. Cigarettes was a medium of exchange. If you had a cigarette, you could trade it to some people for anything. Even with that, there was a limited amount available. Some coconut, some sugar, for short periods of time, even meat – caribou. They would bring in butchered caribou. That’s a water buffalo. I had no real problem with what I thought – my health was pretty good on a comparative basis – and I got across the bunk one day and stood up or got up and my knees folded and I fell on the floor. I thought I felt alright, but the knees just buckled. So I went over to see the doctor, an American doctor, and said what’s the problem? He said, well the problem is one that I can’t do anything about. It has to do with food. But I’m eating pretty well, I said. And he said, where are you getting the half pound of meat a day? Oh, so that’s the difference. I wasn’t getting that much protein and this was a type of beri-beri, I suppose, beri-beri type thing. There were a couple types of beri-beri. One was a swelling and a fluid, and the other was raw nerve-endings, which was a deficiency really.

Q. Was there a lot of disease in the camp?

A. Yes. In the early stages, they were burying, while I was back on Corregidor, and there were 30 or 40 people being buried per day. People would be on burial detail to carry the corpses out to the cemetery one day, and the next day they were there for the ride. It is strange again how people act and react

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under some circumstances. I have seen at least one individual who said “That just isn’t worth it.” He died that night.

Q. So you think his mental attitude – he just gave up and it caused him to die?

A. I think so. It’s a belief really. Perhaps not very scientific, I couldn’t prove it. But the will to live, I think, was an important factor. I didn’t know one could commit suicide just by saying I don’t want to live. Now, and I use the term deliberately, that he was apparently as healthy as I. At least he appeared to be. I have no way of knowing actually what his condition really was, except he thought, “It isn’t worth it,” and died that night. So I really don’t know.

Q. What kind of provision was there for medical care? You said you went to see the camp doctor.

A. No, I said I went to see an American doctor, who was in the same status I was. We had – there was a hospital up at Cabanatuan but they had very limited supplies also. So, really to go to the hospital was the place to go to die. Nobody wanted to go to the hospital. So, there were very limited supplies. What could the American doctors do with nothing? Back on Corregidor, there was a surgeon with us and he used his surgical skill to advantage. He replaced with a knife those things which some medications would do. You can’t do this completely, of course, but he did a good job. He had very limited medical supplies. He had some which were left on Corregidor and he had stayed there. So, he did alright for us while we were on Corregidor. In fact, on Corregidor, with the salvage detail, we were in better shape than other details in the islands. We didn’t know that at the time, but then when we went back to Cabanatuan and saw other groups come in from other details, and hear other stories, we on Corregidor had been getting along quite well. The only difficulty there, my being on Corregidor delayed my wife finding out where I was for about eighteen months. I was reported as missing in action, and it was eighteen months later before I was reported as a POW. Whereas, from Cabanatuan, they had been reported as POWs much earlier. So we were isolated out of the mainstream as far as I know; at this point we were still counted as POWs but had not been reported, or at least she didn’t get word that we were POWs.

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Q. Did the Japanese report the names to the Red Cross or something like that?

A. I assume the Red Cross or whatever agency. Now, the Red Cross, I won’t stop talking about the Red Cross, but the Red Cross made an effort to deliver packages, food packages to POWs. And a food package to a POW at that time was about, oh, a cubic, oh, eight to ten inches cube, a little box. It had a little cheese, a little meat, cigarettes, toothpaste and this kind of thing. It was a nice box.

Q. Was there any problem with other prisoners trying to steal the belongings, like food, or like you say, your mattress pads, or anything like that from each other?

A. Well, let me get over the Red Cross food box and then get back to your question. The first time I ever thought in terms of any aid from the Red Cross or any other agency was when I saw a Japanese soldier, one of our guards, smoking a pack of Lucky Strikes, with a new emblem. Where did it come from? Then one thing led to another and eventually it came out of the Red Cross packages, which the Japanese had confiscated. The Red Cross didn’t distribute, the Japanese did. So, we got nothing at that point. Up at Cabanatuan, there was one Red Cross package delivered, and if I remember correctly, I had to split that with somebody else. So there was one Red Cross package. I got half a Red Cross package. I also had delivered to me one package, which was sent by my wife from here, addressed to me and delivered through whatever Red Cross channels, putting in it those recommended items.

Q. You must have considered that pretty miraculous under the circumstances, that you would get a package from your wife in Wilson, North Carolina.

A. Well, if we had been dealing with as we had said before “an honorable enemy,” it would have been no problem, but the Japanese again, it’s a different world. It’s a different culture. So, the Japanese were not members of the rules of warfare, Geneva Conference, except where it met their own convenience. They were not signers, if I remember correctly, to this. They were under no obligation to do anything with or to us except what they wanted to, other than what eventually world opinion would do for them.

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Q. So, what about the stealing from fellow prisoners and that sort of thing? Did that go on quite a bit?

A. Oh yes. It did. People got into considerable trouble that way because the idea again was survival. There would be absolutely no hesitation in settling the problem, depending on what the situation demanded.

Q. Called for drastic measures?

A. Well, theft under those circumstances was quite drastic. I have no sympathy with them either now or then.

Q. What about collaborators with the Japanese?

A. Yes, we had those. There was one that, in an effort to, for personal gain, had nothing in the world to do with philosophy, patriotism, other than lack of. But in order to gain a little more food, he built the weapons which had been destroyed, far and beyond that which was required. He wanted me to join him in this particular deal and I refused. I also told him that if he was unfortunate to return to the States, I would personally prefer charges against him. He didn’t get back.

Q. Did somebody else get him? Is that what happened?

A. He was still in Corregidor when I left the second time. I don’t know of the circumstances which prevented his return.

Q. It could have been somewhat nefarious?

A. Possible, but I don’t know.

Q. What were the circumstances surrounding your release? I guess you had an idea for a certain amount of time that the Americans were getting closer and closer?

A. We knew when the Americans landed on Leyte and we also knew at that point, were along in September of ’44, I think. They began clearing out the camps. We were in camp #1 in Cabanatuan after, after I had been sent back from Corregidor, which was really a shanghai job because I was fired really and sent back to Cabanatuan because of my refusal to do a job that the Japanese wanted me to do. That was the only repercussion. So, sometime in the – I think – the summer of ’44, a whole herd of planes came out of the east, I

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think. I would have to look at a map really; I think it’s the east and the north, came across Cabanatuan quite high and then there were waves of them, and they were headed to Manila. I couldn’t see any reason why that many Japanese planes would be coming from that direction. So, at that point we suspected that they were Americans. We knew that the Americans were operating someplace in the area, I mean the Navy. So they came across and there was a reluctance to believe this, but you watch them and then you could hear of some preparation for whatever they were going to do wherever they were going. You could hear clearing machine guns, and the flight went across. Well, if that’s Americans they will go to Manila. They are going to bomb the harbor, and they’ll be back. So, given the bomb run and the time and the distance, etc., they should be back in an hour. Sure enough, in an hour here they come back. Now, that sounds pretty good, but if that’s really what we hope it is, there will be another flight pretty soon, going to Manila. Sure enough, another flight comes by. How about that? Okay, so the Americans are really back with the air raids. Another one, a Japanese transport plane came close down to the ground; he was really ground-hopping just over, taking off from someplace. I don’t know where he was going, but another American aircraft just came down and took him right out. He just went up in a ball of smoke. This was right over within sight of the camp.

Q. This was the first concrete evidence –

A. This was concrete evidence we had that the Americans were at least moving back in. So, this was sometime I think, I’m guessing at time, summer I think of ’44.

Q. What did that do to your psychological –

A. Oh, we’d stand there and cheer. I mean, and you don’t even care about the Japanese guards. Then the flight came back and an American ship came down at almost fence level. It came down and went right around the camp, but he very carefully did not fly over the camp, which I think is a violation of something. He went around the camp and waved. Okay. There were new insignias. The last aircraft insignia I saw was a round star with red and white, etc. This one was a star with a bar. We hadn’t seen this, and my comment was, “I don’t know whose planes they are, but they’re on our side.” That’s

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fine. So the Japanese began to move us out, to clear Cabanatuan. They moved us out to Manila and I was in charge of one barracks and my executive officer at that time, we knew we were going to move out. He and I openly planned and discussed that on the route to Manila, we will – there will be four guards on the truck, so at least four of us on the truck, and we will take out the guards on the truck and then take off to the hills, because we say, the Americans have to be now pretty close by. So, now we think we can survive for that period of time. To move out, we’re headed for Japan. No way do we want to go to Japan. But then they separated us by rank, which separated us from each other. Well, I hadn’t made any plans with anybody else on the truck I was going on. But, his truck broke down and was the last to leave, and it was in the dark, and he openly discussed somebody with the other people to let’s make a move and couldn’t get anybody to go with him. So they lined up in Cabanatuan and came in late that night, but they did arrive at Bilibid and the Japanese began to, as they could collect ships, the Americans come over and bomb them again. Then they did load, sometime in September, they loaded ships, normal freighters, unmarked, and I think there were about 1500 and 19 about, something like that. They started and they were bombed before they go out of the Philippines. It was an unmarked Japanese freighter. So they killed a few people that time. They reembarked and started for Taiwan and were bombed again. Somewhere between there and Japan, they were bombed and I think about a half-dozen of that group survived and wound up on the coast of China. A short time later another crew with some 15 – 1600 also left and they were also bombed and very few – a couple of hundred of those – survived, I think. So, out of those 3,000 who left sometime in September, I think September or October, around September, very few survived of those. The individual who was going with me on the escape plan at that point did not survive. Now, I stayed in the Philippines because not having been sick for a long period of time. In the very early stages, there was some dysentery, but survived, got over that, so for a long period of time, I really was in, I thought, reasonably good shape, condition. That is, on a comparative basis. But three or four days, a week before the second ship was going out of Bilibid, out of Manila, the American doctor, I had wound up with dysentery and was put into the hospital in Bilibid. The American doctor, one that I had known previously, came by and said the Japanese were going to make inspection that morning, prior to moving the

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detail out to Japan, so it’s best you look sick. I said, well that shouldn’t be any problem. So, the next morning, the Japanese doctor came by and he wanted to know what’s wrong with this patient, and he said duty. What’s wrong with this patient, duty; what’s wrong with this patient, isolation; what’s wrong with this patient, duty; what’s wrong with this one, hospital, etc. When he got to me he said: “What’s wrong with this one?” He said dysentery. He said isolation. So he sent me over to another wing which was really because it had bars on the window. So the next morning, the – about 15 or 1600 moved up and they were bombed that day or the next day, and so having gotten sick at that particular time again probably saved my life. Why me? Who knows? You could go stark raving mad trying to figure that one out. But the turnover, the actual conditions of the turnover. Now we knew that Americans had landed south of Luzon, had consolidated. We knew they had landed north of Manila. And we knew they were moving down toward Manila. So, on the night of February 2, 3, somewhere along there, we could hear the battle as it came around. You could tell the difference in the sound of the weapons – Japanese and American. And as the battle moved around, and then the next morning, the Americans came in. But prior to that, the day before, the Japanese about noon time – the Japanese lined up very smartly and called the American commander and the Japanese told him that duty requires our going elsewhere. As long as you remain inside the compound you will be safe. If you go outside the gates, go outside the wall, you will be treated as any other belligerent. And they smartly saluted and walked off, and that’s the last we saw of – not quite the last – but anyway, our guards were gone. So we were there from say noon time until the next morning with no guards.

Q. It was just up to the point before the tape cut out on us when the Japanese left and left you there without any guards or anything and said that if you left the camp you would be treated as any other belligerent. Can you pick it up from there?

A. If I remember correctly, the Japs left basically at noontime – the middle of the day and they stated we would be safe enough if we remained inside the camp. And since there was no place else to go at that point, we did just that. We stayed inside the camp. But the American troops were coming straight down the – I think it was Cal Tech Highway, from the north, straight into Manila and it was part of the Sixth Army, I have forgotten which regiment.

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But they were coming down and they had no major problems coming down and they then folded in around the camp around Manila. We could hear the battle. As it developed during the night, you could tell which army was where because of the different sounds of the small arms fire. And sometime during the following morning, I think it was around the third of February, we heard a noise outside a boarded-up window on one of the walls and we were curious as to who was out there, and the people outside knocked the boards down and we saw this strange-uniformed troop. It was a uniform we had never seen before – green fatigues and the weapons were different. We recognized them of course that they were actually Americans. Their comment was when they saw who was on the inside, or what was behind the boarded-up area, their comment was, or question, “How do you get in?” All they thought was how do you get in? We were not concerned about how you get in – we wanted to know how you get out! But they wanted to know where the gate actually was. So we told them to go around to the corner and down to the main gate. So they did. They went around and came in with no problems.

Q. What were your feelings when they first knocked down those boards and you could see Americans – other Americans standing out there?

A. I’m not really sure. I think it was an anti-climax. We knew that they were coming. We had been waiting for them for nearly three years and perhaps just a numbness – but as far as any major reaction was concerned, I’m really not sure. There was the usual whooping and hollering and carrying-on. But, a relief perhaps, but, it’s finally happened, but – it’s difficult to describe actually the feelings at the time. Perhaps, reservation, I don’t know, but anyway – we had talked about this, had expected it to some degree, and as it came closer, then it became a little more obvious that we would still be alive to see it. We talked in terms of food, as to what they would do to us and for us, and we thought that the American troops would or at least the hospital elements, would take us in tow, put us on a very limited diet, and build us back to that degree. It didn’t happen that way. These were strictly front-line troops and they shared their food with us. Actually they had outrun their supply lines, because they fought their way down into Manila, and the battle kept going around – the supply lines just didn’t catch up, because the Japanese troops folded in behind them across the highway so they were actually cut off. So, for a little while, it was debatable as to whether or not we were actually

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liberated, or the Japs were going to have more prisoners. But, at least a little different fighting chance. So, the battle was around; there were Japanese all around in higher buildings overlooking the wall. There was some sniper fire coming into the compound, shell fragments of one kind or another, mortar shells. So we were still in the midst of a battle-field.

Q. So you didn’t have time for a tickertape parade?

A. This wasn’t that type of – no. But they shared their food with us and many people ate and ate and got sick and then ate and got sick again. But after a few days – it lasted a few days – and then we were to be taken back north. So the transportation in and we were loaded on trucks and we carried whatever we wanted with us. There was nothing really, except a few personal items we had. We left bedding and that type of thing, that was in the prison at the time. And actually the prison at that time was labeled as a hospital. The civilian prisoners were over at Santo Tomas University within a few blocks and they were American citizens who had been working there, both male and female, and families who had been in the Philippines when the war started. And all of us were taken on transportation by trucks back and north. We thought we were going back to Cabanatuan which is some little distance north of Manila. But we got out to a shoe factory on the outskirts of Manila, not very far outside the northern part of Manila. And we pulled into the shoe factory and we spent the night – again on the floor. Nobody complained. But anyway, we were there, and at this time, there was a mixture of the civilians and the military, and we saw people that we had known previously and hadn’t seen for many, many years. Some of whom were looking for husbands who had been shipped out within the last two or three months. They didn’t know, but most of them had been lost on the ships as they were sunk, after they had left the Philippines enroute to Japan or Formosa and Japan.

Q. Did you know at the time that you wouldn’t have to see anymore action, or you wouldn’t be assigned to another unit or something like that, or did you know that you would be going home eventually, or what was the scene as far as that goes? Did you feel like it was pretty much over for you?

A. Well, I figured they wouldn’t give us any action there. We would be returned to the States immediately. There was no – Frankly, I think, collectively we would have bee a liability to any operations. But we stayed at the shoe

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factory overnight and the next morning the trucks were there again and we assumed we were going north and we really weren’t concerned about it. We didn’t try to pick up news or try to get them to say where we were going and when. It really didn’t matter. We weren’t fenced in anymore. The trucks turned south back toward Manila which was rather strange, and we went back to Bilibid. Well, this wasn’t exactly as we had planned or hoped and the reason we went back was that the roads were closed. The Japanese had moved back in and controlled the highway. So we stayed back again for some two or three days. This time, everything had been stripped. In other words the Filipinos had come in behind us, the civilian Filipinos, and had – whatever the term is – salvaged or liberated or whatever was of any value, had taken it off. I mean, bedding, beds, or whatever. Anything that was of any value to them. So we were back now for two or three days with less than we had before, except we did have the Americans to feed us again. And they continued to feed us, without restraint. As long as you wanted something to eat, it was there.

Q. That must have been an awful nice feeling.

A. Oh yes. Somebody opened the pantry door, yeah. But there was still a question of, and the troops shared this with us, they still had not been resupplied. So, after two or three days, I think, the transportation again was there and we left. Went north, up around the Gulf. Actually what happened to the civilians at that point, I am not really sure. I have forgotten that particular aspect, except they came home, of course, but I mean we went into a military camp and they fed us. The food service personnel had specific instructions that as long as they hold that mess kit to keep filling it up, so there was no period training, so to speak, as far as the medics were concerned.

Q. There must have been some people who stood there with that mess kit for a long period of time.

A. People continued to eat too much, yes. But I went over to headquarters to see people that I possibly had known and they assigned me a jeep, gave me a watch and 40 bucks and a driver, with instructions to report to me every morning at the camp and take me anyplace I wanted to go. With specific instructions that if he, the driver, got me in the situation where I got shot up,

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off goes his head! So, I had a driver and a jeep assigned for the duration, as long as I was in that particular camp. We went back down to camp #3. The second camp at Cabanatuan – the first one I was in a very short time, ten days. I went back to Manila

Corregidor and stayed for some 18 months. Then we shanghaied from that back to camp #3 and, as I mentioned earlier, shanghaied in as much as I refused to do, particularly so with the Japanese. But the driver took me back down to that particular camp and this is a little eery because it was a long stretch and I wasn’t quite sure where the Japs were and we got into the area which we perhaps should not have gotten in. Anyway, it was an interesting trip back to Cabanatuan and this time I at least could leave when I wanted to. But then on another trip, we went into up around the battle lines, the front lines, where the Japs were still living, and up in between, and then it was off into the hill area, and I actually was somewhat between the two. And I looked around to see where I was and I said “I don’t know what I’m doing here. I think I had better get out of here in a hurry.” This was ridiculous after three years to wind up in between two fighting armies – forget that. So, another trip, the Japanese had installed ten or twelve mortar battery, which is high-angle fire, a fair-sized weapon. But they’d saw *(RLW: installed?)* that into one back up on the coast so they could lob shells into the landing force down on the gulf, and it was pretty well camouflaged because it was dug into a hole, really. It was down in a pretty well camouflaged hole, which was alright because it was high-angle fire. But the camouflage was a roof over the top of it on wheels and rollers which would roll off the back when they were going to use it, out of the way, and just roll over the top of it just like a native house. So –it was pretty well done. So, when we turned off the main road, I told the driver I wanted to see it, and he knew where it was and as we went down and turned off the main road, just as we turned off the main road, he stopped his jeep, took his carbine, put a round in the chamber, and laid it across his lap. I wasn’t quite sure what he was doing, and asked “What’s the deal?” I also put a round in the pistol and, okay, it’s there for whatever we need. And he said, well, the only problem is that last time we came into this area, there was no real problem in coming in, but we had a little problem getting out. So, okay, here we go again. But we went up, we did see the gun, and the American company that was up in the area, and there were patrols going out at that point – small squad-size patrols going out and coming back, just probing, to be

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sure to see where the Japanese were, how far back, etc. And there was no problem, in going in, nor in getting out. However, on the ship, I think it was the Mariposa, down in New Guinea, and one officer came on board and he looked like a mummy. He was pretty well bandaged-up. And in talking to him, said where was he, he had just come from the Philippines. He was up at that same mortar site and the Japs moved back in that time. So, the war was still very much a give and take, going-on situation.

Q. And you had slipped out?

A. Oh, I got out — yes. Maybe somebody was looking after me. But, after we were in Cabanatuan, in the camp there, oh, it took some little time, and then they flew us out down to a staging area and from there, we went on a boat to – the Mariposa I believe – to New Guinea to San Francisco. The day we went across is the same day that they dropped in a strike on Corregidor, to begin the retaking of that.

Q. Did you hear about that on the news?

A. Oh, we were in sight. I mean, we went by Corregidor, to know what they were doing. We had to fly by Corregidor, not right over it, but by it so you could see it. But the people who were going in did talk to us on Corregidor and they wanted to know what’s there now, or the last time you were there. How many Japanese do you know were there at that time? Where were they? What changes? What’s the installation like? Specifically, if you were going in, how would you go in and at what time? So we answered the questions and again the question comes up, did they want us to go in with them? No, they did not. All they wanted was information, and probably thought, as I mentioned, that we would probably be a liability at that point. But, I knew the island, the trails, what was there, where ammunitions dumps had been, where caves and bunkers were, so we could point that out, and how to go in, which side to go in. If I were going, as to which way I would go. So how they went in and whether or not the information was any value to them, I have no way of knowing – except they did, of course, take it back. They went in with a landing party ahead of time and an airdrop too. But they also went in the landing party for information, just gathering information to go in and out. They just went in, landed; they probably landed on the back side of the island and went up.

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Q. What were the circumstances when you got back to the States? What exactly did you go through?

A. Well, when I left on the Mariposa, and this had been a luxury liner, changed into a troop ship, and they treated us quite well. The waiters, like any other ship, came to the table, took the order, and there was a choice of menu, and served it very graciously.

Q. You must have been feeling great at that time.

A. Oh, this was just — , but on the Mariposa, a couple of things happened. One, I was sitting on the edge of the bunk in the stateroom with the door open, and some soldier walked by, backed up and said, “Is your name Winstead?” I said yes. And he said, “From Wilson?” Yes. Now, this in the middle of the Pacific. He said, I’m, whatever – I have forgotten his name, but I’m from Elm City and I used to play baseball with you. And I said, no, you have the wrong Winstead. That was my brother. So, he was coming straight back, and he was coming straight here to Wilson, and I knew at that point I would be shore-stopped in San Francisco for some period of time. So, I gave him my wife’s address here in town and just said, okay, just go by and see her and answer any questions. I mean, she was bound to have questions.

Q. Had you been able to communicate with her at all?

A. At that point, possibly I had written a letter, but I figured I was going to get out pretty soon, anyway. And of course the news that we had been released, and she would have gotten that, I figured. I don’t remember actually communicating until we got to San Francisco. But, one other thing on this ship coming back, whether or not the leaving – we had a Navy escort down to New Guinea. From there to San Francisco the skipper of the ship said he didn’t really want an escort; it would hold him up because he figured he could outrun anything the Japs had, anyway. I’m glad he was right, I hope. But sometime during the night, there was a terrific thump or thud on the side of the ship, and I still don’t know what it was unless he hit a wave just right or just wrong or whatever. But it was a terrific thud, and the one in the bunk above me hit the deck and had on a lifejacket before he was awake almost. His reaction was almost reflex because he said he had had one ship shot out from under him and that was enough. But whether or not it was a torpedo or whatever, I don’t know. But it did sound as if something really hit the side

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of the ship. If there was a whale, he got a sore head. But anyway, I really have no idea what. But we arrived in San Francisco, and the usual greeting quarters and bands and fanfare and Eddie Cantor was at the dock among other Hollywood celebrities. So the city goes out. San Francisco will use any excuse for celebration. So, they took us straight into Letterman General Hospital. We were confined there and we were given the usual examinations and then the problem came about in getting transportation to where we were going. But at that time, I called my wife and told her where I was and she didn’t know whether she wanted to come out or what, but transportation was difficult at that point to get reservations or space on a train or whatever.

Q. Most of it was reserved for the Armed Forces I guess?

A. That’s right. They advised against it — don’t have your families come out. So, after some period of time, transportation was arranged, and I went to Washington. My wife went to Washington and I met her there, stayed overnight in Washington, came back to Wilson the next day on a train, and I knew there was a parade scheduled, so, rather than get off the train and get in the midst of a parade without seeing the rest of the family, I got off in Rocky Mount and met the family over there. So we rode back here, and visited during that point. But the guard here met us and we had an escort in Rocky Mount. So, we came back and they escorted us all the way from Rocky Mount back. But I had an uncle here who met me at the house and as soon as I pulled off my hat – he said that’s all I wanted to know. I’ll see you later. What he really wanted to know was if I had turned grey.

Q. Had you?

A. I had not. But I had gained back a little weight but not enough. The parade ended at the Courthouse with a platform, radio coverage – the technician/engineer for the radio station – that particular one was Warren Wooten, who ran RCA radio and TV shop on Nash Street here later. The announcer was Clint Ferris and the Lieutenant Governor was here. There was also an aerial salute from pursuit planes from Seymour Johnson. It was a pretty good affair.

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Q. Is that when you got the key to the city?

A. That’s when they gave me the key to the city, and, of course, the Mayor and the other city officials were there. But, Clint Ferris was trying to put me at ease. He didn’t know me – he knew of me, but he didn’t know me, and he didn’t know what to expect. So, he was trying to put me at ease to be sure, and he wanted to know later on, he said “Do you want my job?” Because apparently I was more at ease than he was. I didn’t have anything to worry about. What I had to worry about then had been left behind me. So the family stayed here for a few weeks and then I reported to a hospital for additional observations and treatment.

Q. Were you having any kind of medical problems?

A. No, no: this is routine, a case history, just routine. So I went to Moore General Hospital up at Swannanoa, up near Ashville, which was about as near as I could get. I knew that when I left San Francisco, that’s where I was going. So, I stopped in Wilson and then reported into Swannanoa and I was assigned a bed, but also took my wife with me that time and we stayed in a hotel at Black Mountain and had a room there. Also maintained a bed at the hospital which I didn’t use. In fact, one night I was at the hotel downtown and a Navy officer came through looking for a room. There was nothing in the hotel, and I told him if he just wanted a bed, I said, “I have a bed if that’s all you want.” So, the hospital was about 5, 6 or 7 miles out. So, I called the nurse out at the hospital and told her I was sending him out and to give him a bed and point him toward the officers’ club. So, the next morning when I went back to the hospital, he had been in and used the bed. I don’t know who he was, but — . After I stayed there – when I reported in to the hospital, it was after hours because I had checked in at the hotel. I was on time, but it wasn’t such that I had to be there at 8:00 in the morning of whatever, so I reported in and the corpsman on duty, rather bored, not quite sleepy, but indifferent until he read the orders. Then as soon as he read the orders, and found out who he was dealing with, or at least the category he was dealing with, he grabs the phone and called and said send an ambulance around here right away. I looked around and there was nobody else there but me, and I asked, “What’s the ambulance for?” He said, “That’s for you.” “Why? Where am I going?” He said something like around to the ward. I still couldn’t understand why I needed an ambulance, how far I was going, and he said, the ward was right

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down the hall, less than half a block. And I said, “Well, I can walk.” And he said, “No, I couldn’t walk because they had specific instructions that any “category J,” that’s what we were labeled, I suppose for Japanese – any other category J people coming into the hospital were to be treated with every particular facility, courtesy and everything. I felt this was going a little overboard with an ambulance. I thought I was still ambulatory. But anyway they took me around on the ambulance and delivered me to the ward and I received very gracious treatment and we went through the usual routine of examination, one of which was interesting because I got a call to go down to Ward #3 or something and meet a given doctor somebody – I have forgotten the name. So, I walked down and I saw this doctor standing in the hall, and as I walked down, he wanted to know “Are you Major Winstead?” I said yes. And I said are you Doctor so and so? And he said yes. And he just – it didn’t take any mastermind to figure that this particular doctor was a psychiatrist. And as soon as I figured it, I laughed. He said, “What’s so funny?” I said, “I just found out what you are doing. You’re trying to see if I’m capable of handling my own money.” And that’s true. It was just before I was to get paid again. I didn’t object to it. He said, yeah; he laughed and said, “That’s true. That’s what the exercise is all about.”

Q. That brings to mind an interesting question. Did you feel like there were some people who were permanently affected psychologically by this type of experience that you went through? Obviously, you came through it really well. But were there others you feel might not have come back the same person they left as?

A. Oh, yes. There were people who were damaged psychologically or mentally, whatever your term, beyond repair, really, as well as physically. There were those who were near blind. There were those who were crippled. Most any kind of disease – in fact, I heard of one case of leprosy. But, yes there were those who were permanently disabled because of the experience. Whether or not they would have been disabled under other circumstances, who knows? But, yes, it was traumatic and some survived better than others.

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Q. That leads to the next question. Do you feel like – this is kind of a broad question, comprehensive, — but, do you feel like you were changed in any way by the experience, as far as maybe your outlook on things? Or did you suffer depression or anything like that when you got out?

A. I don’t think so. But perhaps other people would disagree. I really don’t think I was changed to that degree. The periodicals here, as I learned later, some written by psychologists, psychiatrists, etc., as to what type of situation we were going through and this was speculation because they didn’t know. But they were trying to outguess our behavior and reaction to those particular circumstances. There were periodicals telling the public how to treat us. You know, don’t send them off — be careful and don’t really get into controversial items because of the hair-trigger type of situation. They go off like a herd of birds or whatever. Many people believed it, to the extent that when I came back, I went up to Delaware to see my cousin. And, in visiting with him and his family – he had been reading these things too, so had his family – after we got settled in the house and were just chatting, he looked at his family and he said to forget everything that we have said before because he is just like he was except more so. I didn’t know what he was talking about but this was exactly what he was talking about because he wasn’t quite sure how the conversation could or would go, or what was a legitimate subject for conversation and he had been listening to this propaganda also.

Q. Were they not supposed to talk about your experiences?

A. They weren’t quite sure. They didn’t know what to talk about because they didn’t know what my reaction would be to what. As far as I am concerned, my reaction was that I was glad to be out.

Q. After having gone through all of this, do you have any philosophical feelings about maybe why you were the one who made it out in real good shape as compared to a lot of other people who didn’t make it out in good shape or didn’t make it out at all? Do you think about that much? Did you at the time?

A. Well, if you want to dwell on the fact as to why I came back and so many didn’t, there is no answer for that. You can go stark-raving mad trying to figure out why me and not somebody else because a heavy percentage did die, either there or on the ships headed for Japan. The ultimate purpose for my being here, who knows? You could get into philosophical, religious – but I

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have no answer for this. I don’t dwell on it. I am glad to be here. As far as depression is concerned, no, I don’t think so. I don’t live in the past. I think somewhere along the line, as I said earlier, you have to work at hate or remembering the disagreeable aspects and your memory attempts to gloss over the disagreeable and the more pleasant aspects show through. So, I don’t know. It could — maybe I was always that way, this way. I don’t know.

Q. Do you feel like the experience changed your personality or changed your thinking about things in any significant ways? Do you feel like it made you stronger, able to withstand things a little better than you could before you lived through that? Or anything like that?

A. Well, I may complain a little less. One thing that I always ask the question of why – and one of which has to do with pain, physical pain. How much pain do you endure before you really yell and complain, as opposed to how much I endure before I reach the same level of complaint? I don’t know. This has always been an interesting one. I don’t know that there is any way of measuring at this point. But it still is an interesting question to me as to the pain endured or a set of circumstances endured by one person as opposed to those similar circumstances endured by another. Your reaction in camp and the Japanese – there were those who complained always. There were those who never complained, who accepted the situation for what it was; one that you couldn’t change at that point and we hoped there would come a time when we could change it and we did. We weren’t sure how it would come about. It came about more easily than I anticipated. I thought there would come a time when I would have to fight my way out again. It didn’t quite happen that way. In fact, I had an organization schedule; I mean organized exactly that way. But a group of about 25, we decided that 25 would go. This will be taking guards and everything else out at the same time, permanently. But — .

Q. Did you come close to doing that?

A. Only once, we seriously thought that this was close to the time. But that didn’t quite materialize either, because we got separated on the trucks going back into Manila. But that we would have done. The survival – how we would have survived under those circumstances, I don’t know because I am the only one who survived. The others in the group didn’t. The same thing with the

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request to leave camp from Corregidor; and I decided not to go and I am the only one of the group to survive.

Q. Do you feel like that experience changed your attitudes on various current events like the hostage situation? Do you feel sense a of empathy maybe with the Iranian hostages and that sort of thing? Did you feel like it gave you a different outlook on trends that go on all over the world today?

A. Well, I suppose, yes, there is a degree of empathy with the hostages in Iran. The situation was different. I really don’t know how that one came about. I don’t know how we allowed that to happen. My attitude would not be one of patience, of waiting for some 400 days to get them out. Now, since they did get out and did survive, you can say that well, had we attempted to go in, somebody would not have survived. This is true. This is like saying that under no circumstances, well, in other words, being basically for peace. Well, I think I am basically for peace but not at any cost. I think there are some things worth fighting for and there are situations under which one is forced to fight. I would not have waited, had I been in control, which I was not of course, in the Iranian situation. I would not have waited the length of time for an attempted rescue. I would not have tried to go in with a skeleton force in an attempted rescue. But I would have attempted a rescue, knowing that some damage would possibly be done. But you also have national prestige to think about.

Q. I would now like to ask you some of the same questions that I asked you the first time we met. But they were obliterated in the old tape somewhere. Some of your general feelings about some of the people you were under as far as command goes and that sort of thing. First of all, what were your general feelings about General Wainwright, the commander of the Philippine forces, as a subordinate?

A. Well, Wainwright was in command after MacArthur was ordered out of the Philippines by President Roosevelt. And I knew Wainwright on the island for that period of time. As a general, he was competent. A totally different personality than MacArthur.

Q. In what way?

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A. Wainwright was more accessible, easier for anyone to talk to. He had the disagreeable chore of surrendering a command, but MacArthur should not have stayed. He did exactly what he should have done – what Roosevelt ordered him to do. He left and went to Australia and organized a command and fought a successful war until the Japanese surrendered.

Q. So, you were basically an admirer of General MacArthur then?

A. I think he is the best we have produced to date. I am familiar with the derogatory comments and descriptions of “Dug-out Doug:” he is an egoist, which is true, but that’s part of him. Perhaps he had more to be – well. He had the ability to select a staff and follow the recommendations of the staff at the right time or to deviate from the recommendations of his staff when he thought otherwise. But as far as I am concerned, he was the best. He took the residue and fought a successful jungle campaign from Australia to New Guinea up the island chain to Japan. Whereas, General Eisenhower took the total industrial output of two continents and finally brought the European conflict to a close. So, as far as the two generals are concerned, I don’t think – I think Eisenhower doesn’t even come close to the capabilities of MacArthur. As far as MacArthur’s run-in with Truman, this is an interesting story too. I have no argument with Truman’s legal firing of MacArthur or relieving him of command. He was perfectly within his jurisdiction and he was probably provoked sufficiently to do it. On that score, I think MacArthur was wrong. But I think Truman was wrong in his method of doing it. You can’t take a forty-year, fifty-year career in the military and destroy it overnight. And, of course, he didn’t, but that seemed to be the intent. Maybe MacArthur made him so mad, he didn’t care what happened to MacArthur.

Q. I think that was probably the case.

A. But you will find people, I think, there is a very limited middle ground with MacArthur. They either like him or they dislike him. I happen to like the man. I lived with him, worked with him, observed him under fire. Fear to me is a normal emotion. I think that MacArthur, like everybody else, recognized fear. But he had it under absolute control. I have seen him stand in the middle of the road in a Japanese air-raid. After the air-raid was over, he got back in his automobile and went on to where he was headed to begin with. I think this is a little foolish, but — .

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*Addendum footnote from son Ray Winstead: I recall my father telling me and others about another occasion when he and General MacArthur, along with a few others, were sitting at the same table eating a meal outside when one of the air attacks resumed. (This was before General MacArthur was ordered to leave the Philippines, before the surrender of Bataan, and before the shelling of Corregidor by Japanese artillery from Bataan.) This was outside, near the entrance to Malinta Tunnel. The others at the table immediately scattered for shelter, however General MacArthur just sat there, leaving General MacArthur and my father sitting at the table alone with each other. My father told us that he was waiting for General MacArthur to leave first. However, General MacArthur said to my father, “The enemy bomb that will kill me has not been made yet.” At that point my father said, “Please excuse me, General,” and left for shelter. I think this story illustrates further that my father observed and believed that General MacArthur had an effective way to keep fear under absolute control.*

Q. What were your general feelings about Roosevelt, considering that he had pretty much sacrificed you all, like you said earlier in the tape; I think you heard the broadcast when he said that certain people were going to have to be expendable or something like that - - ?

A. Well, in the early stages listening to the radio on KGEI from San Francisco, on one of Roosevelt’s fireside chats, he was talking about the plans of the war, which way it would go and what had to be done and he said that small units will be sacrificed. My comment at the time, you might as well turn that off because we have just been written off. But, looking at the geography, there was no choice. There was no hope for resupply at that time. The Pacific was a Japanese lake. They had total control. So, I knew that Americans would eventually come back. I just hoped I would be there when they got there. But, as far as my attitude on Roosevelt, I suppose I felt like many other, most other Americans, I suppose, that he was doing an excellent job. That we had been provoked and pushed into World War II, but not until, at that point I suppose I was an admirer of Roosevelt. After reading many, many articles, books, etc., there seems to be enough documented information to impeach Roosevelt posthumously. Not that it would be done, of course.

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Q. He was breaking the law?

A. We were breaking international law inasmuch as we were acting with our ships in the Atlantic in ways that a neutral was prohibited from acting. We were neutral in name only. We were neutral against Germany. But aside from that, I think he pushed to the point, had already decided, that we were to enter World War II and he was probably right. But the American people, at that point, just wanted no part of it. Then, what he was doing, he figured, I think, that he had to have some provocation to do this. I think he was under influence by Churchill. I think he was hoodwinked later by Stalin. But the provocation of the Japanese – the Japanese were almost pushed into their position. He gave them an ultimatum and they didn’t back down from it. So, I think he knew well in advance what he was doing. He was getting us involved in World War II deliberately, because he felt he had to defeat Germany. Whatever his motives were, I think he was in error in several ways. But the U.S. public is apparently divided on the same question right now.

Q. Getting into something more general now, how did the experience of being in World War II and being a prisoner of the Japanese and all that sort of thing affect your life once you got back and all the hoopla had died down? After the parades and stuff like that. Do you feel it had any effect?

A. I just enjoyed living. I mean every day. I completed the military career and put in about 25 years.

Q. How long were you in after ’45?

A. I retired at the end of ’57 and this was the end of – about 12 years, in the duty stations, Fort Monroe, Virginia and back to Fort Scott, California and then to Fort Totten in New York and Panama and two stations in Panama – one on the Pacific and one on the Atlantic side. And then back to headquarters in Atlanta, then back to Korea, then back to Fort Bragg for retirement. One of the most pleasant duties, I suppose, was down in Panama. That was tropical, pleasant duty where the position is anti-aircraft battalion commander and post commander on the Atlantic side. Post commander at Fort Davis which is on the Atlantic entrance to the Canal Zone anti-aircraft defenses there. And of course, we were on continual alert status there. *(RLW: This was during the Korean War.)* I mean at any time there was a total anti-aircraft defense on

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this side. It was a very pleasant duty; I enjoyed it. We lived in the middle of a golf course, number three fairway went down in front of the house and number three green was just a little front and to the left of the front of the house.

Q. You had a nice lawn then?

A. That’s right. Number nine fairway went down behind the house. And we’d get ricochets once in a while.

Q. Like you were saying, I guess just any kind of normal, everyday experience, just walking around a beautiful city or eating a good meal must have meant a lot more to you, after eating rice balls and living behind barbed-wire for three years.

A. Well, that’s true. It’s a matter of freedom of movement but the things which we normally take for granted – electric lights, running water, telephone, a good bed, the lack of a locked gate – these things make a very big difference. But there are people who are living in those conditions today, and not necessarily behind barbed-wire. But you have the Berlin fence which keeps people in; communism may be a beautiful system for some people but I can’t imagine a system which has to build a brick wall to prevent people from leaving if it’s so good.

Q. It does seem to be a bit strange. When you look back on your experiences in World War II, do you like to read a lot about that time period and do you look back and think this is really something that most people cannot experience. Do you have any – what I am trying to say, I guess, is do you have any general thoughts when you look back on your days in World War II?

A. I read some of the books which relate to the action in the Philippines and see some of the old movies now, some of the ones that came out —.

Q. Like “Back to Bataan” with John Wayne?

A. Yeah, well, that’s the usual John Wayne. What they do is they take a bit of truth and run it on a sensational basis and make it so that people will watch it. But it doesn’t bother me to watch it. It doesn’t bother me if I miss it. I mean I don’t feel that I have missed that much. I have seen – I lived it and it doesn’t

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bother me either to talk about it, to read about it or not to. I mean there’s no real reaction because I just don’t live in the past.

Q. Did you ever have any feelings of bitterness against the Japanese?

A. Not really. The American soldiers and the Filipino soldiers didn’t treat the Japanese prisoners with kid gloves, either. The big difference of course is that there were more of us. We didn’t take that many Japanese prisoners. It’s a difference in philosophy. But the American soldiers perhaps to answer your question with an illustration – the American soldiers that came in and liberated us from Bilibid – they were still in the midst of battle. I mean they were in and out of Bilibid after the initial opening of that front gate. They were in and out but they were still in a battle situation and the battle raged around and downtown and all around us for numbers of days. But they captured some few Japanese and they also captured some who, by whatever method, they determined had been guards at Cabanatuan; they treated them a little roughly. They brought them back. One in particular, I remember, they brought him back, a half dozen American soldiers brought this one Japanese back, somewhat under protest but he was basically stripped, and he had been mishandled pretty well. They brought him back in and basically threw him at our feet. They said there he is; he’s all yours.

Q. And they expected you to mistreat him?

A. Yeah, that’s right. What did I want with him? I mean this to me is a helpless old man at that point. But there was no – the type of animosity to seek vengeance on that particular individual under those circumstances – no.

Q. So you felt like he had just been in a war situation just like you were?

A. He had been doing what he was told to do. There were others – there was one particular one on Corregidor that we would have eliminated as an individual but he would have been a stinker under any nationality. But anyway, we didn’t quite –weren’t quite successful on that one.

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Q. What were your feelings about the war in Vietnam? Any feelings in particular?

A. Well, yes. Without going into the history of how we got there, as to whether we should or should not have gone there, my reaction was that once we were there, there was only one action to take and that is to bring the fighting to a successful and rapid conclusion. And you can’t do this by having the State Department run things.

End of Transcript

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Conclusion

I learned several things from doing this oral history project, some specific facts and some truths on a somewhat deeper level. An example: I learned that before you go to do your interview, you should know how to operate your tape recorder well. On a deeper level, I learned that Colonel Winstead saw his enemies – the Japanese – as individuals. Some were cruel, some decent. Honestly, I had expected him to describe the Japanese as barbarians, based on the circumstances. Again, the latter are examples of the two kinds of things I learned – now, let me be a little more specific.

I learned a number of things about the practice of oral history and, as a consequence, about the work of an historian on a very practical level.

Interviewing is the key to good oral history; it can also be a very important tool in any historical research. In order to conduct a successful interview, you have to be well prepared in two ways. First, you have to have a good knowledge of the historical era with which you will be dealing. In my case, I read two good books on the Philippine campaign including Corregidor. This research was invaluable in enabling me to ask better questions. An interviewer who did not do this kind of background work would not be able to conduct a good interview. This is true of any kind of interviewing.

Also important in the preparation for the interview is some practice with the tape recorder you are going to use. My first interview tape could not be used because it was impossible to hear Col. Winstead. All I needed was a microphone – simple enough, but I had to learn the hard way. With Col. Winstead’s good-natured help, we got it right the second time around.

So, on a more practical level, the two most important things for the oral historian to consider are a decent amount of background research on your subject and the ability to master your tape recorder. Don’t let it get the best of you.

On a deeper level, I learned several things from Col. Winstead. Obviously, I was able to learn more about what went on in the Philippines and on Corregidor during the war but “facts” can be picked up in several other ways. What I also got were the feelings of one man while all this was going on around him.

Two things that Col. Winstead said really stand out in my mind. First, as I mentioned earlier, he said that his Japanese guards were individuals. There were some brutal guards but there were also those who treated their prisoners

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decently. That there are good and bad people on each side of a conflict may seem obvious to some but for many of us it is all too easy to see the enemy as barbaric and savage. We become victims of our government’s propaganda bombardment. After all, in any conflict, both sides see themselves as being on the “right” side.

The most important thing to come out of Col. Winstead’s story was a reaffirmation of my belief that a man is capable of surviving almost anything with his faith and dignity intact. Col. Winstead survived an extended imprisonment, a severe loss of weight and an extended stay in the midst of human suffering and misery. That he survived is a testament to the inner strength of his character and to the resiliency, adaptability and strength of mankind. This gives me some hope for the future.

The Value of Oral History

Oral history can be an excellent tool for the historian to use – in many ways. The techniques used by the oral historian (background research and interviewing skills) are techniques used by all historians. Books, pamphlets and the like can provide a wealth of information but they can not provide the “total” picture. In order to get the “human” perspective of great historical events, you have to talk to someone who was actually there. Obviously, the historian is going to be limited to interviewing those who have taken part in more recent history. It would be somewhat difficult for example to find someone who fought in the Battle of Waterloo but it would be relatively easy to find a veteran of the Vietnam War. There are many people around now who have played some kind of a role in the making of history – even if it was a small one. They can all be valuable sources of information to the historian.

The kind of information obtained in this project is valuable, to a certain extent, but there already exists a plethora of information on World War II. Oral history is perhaps more valuable in areas where much less information is available. A good example, especially in this area, would be the civil rights movement. Many of Dr. Martin Luther King’s words have been preserved for posterity, but what of the thoughts and feelings of those who participated in the lunch-counter sit-ins in Greensboro or of those who faced the fire-hoses and guard dogs of Public Safety Commissioner “Bull” Conner in Birmingham. These are the people who can provide excellent resources for the oral historian.

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Other good possibilities for oral history research would be Vietnam veterans and the people of Appalachia. Good books that have been done on these two groups include Everything We Had by Al Santoli, a collection of interviews with Vietnam vets and the Foxfire books which contain many interviews with the “backwoods” people of Appalachia. Really, anyone can be a good source for an oral history project – it all depends on the aim and skill of the oral historian. We are all a part of history.

I hope this project – despite any weaknesses – will inspire others at Atlantic Christian to undertake an oral history project. I found it to be a very educational experience and, above all – fun.

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